

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A continuous metal connector for use in the fabrication of structural I-beams comprising upper and lower flanges in which each flange includes a pair of timber members, the connector ~~having~~ including:

(i) a continuous metal web, the web extending continuously in a direction along the flanges of the I-beam and transversely between the flanges of the I-beam; and

(ii) two spatially separated attachment sections that ~~can be~~ are integrally formed with the metal web and extend therefrom, the attachment sections are located between the timber members of each flange, wherein at least one of the attachment sections has a plurality of spikes projecting outwardly from opposite sides that are capable of piercing and fastening one pair of timber members to the connector to form one of the flanges of the ~~beam~~ I-beam.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): The metal connector according to claim 1, wherein each attachment section has spikes projecting outwardly from each side for piercing and fastening pairs of timber members thereto in the form of an I-beam.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The metal connector according to claim 1, wherein the spikes are provided by tabs made in the attachment section(s) and interconnected thereto by interconnecting portions, the interconnecting portions being bent so that the tabs project outwardly.

Claim 4 (Original): The metal connector according to claim 3, whereby in order to prevent deformation of the attachment section(s) during attachment of the timber members to the spikes, the interconnecting portion of a majority of the spikes projecting outwardly from one

side of the attachment section(s) are located adjacent to the interconnecting portion of spikes that project outwardly from the opposite side of the attachment section(s).

Claim 5 (Original): The metal connector according to claim 4, wherein the spikes projecting from opposite sides of the attachment section(s) have adjacent interconnecting portions that are separated by a spacing that ranges from 3 to 15mm.

Claim 6 (Original): The metal connector according to claim 5, wherein the spacing between adjacent interconnecting portions of spikes projecting in opposite directions ranges from 4 to 8mm.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The metal connector according to claim 5, wherein adjacent interconnecting portions are separated by spaces that are equal to or less than the length of the spikes projecting from the attachment section(s).

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): The metal connector according to claim 1, wherein the spikes are arranged in rows and ranks on the attachment section(s), and that adjacent interconnecting portions of the spikes projecting from opposite sides of the attachment section(s) are in different ranks.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): The metal connector according to claim 8, wherein the ranks are arranged diagonally across the attachment section(s) such that the interconnecting portions of the spikes in one rank be located adjacent to the interconnecting portion of the spikes in another rank.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): The metal connector according to claim 8, wherein the rows or ranks are defined by a plurality of pairs of spikes projecting outwardly from one side of the attachment section(s).

Claim 11 (Original): The metal connector according to claim 10, wherein the ranks are defined by pairs of spikes projecting from one side of the attachment section(s) and adjacent ranks have pairs of spikes projecting outwardly from opposite sides of the attachment section(s).

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): The metal connector according to claim 1, wherein the length of the spikes ranges from 3 to 15mm.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): The metal connector according to claim 1, wherein the length of the spikes ranges from 5 to 9mm.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The metal connector according to claim 1, wherein the spikes have means for preventing timber once attached to the spikes from becoming separated or detached from the spikes.

Claim 15 (Original): The metal connector according to claim 14, wherein the means for preventing the timber from separating from the spikes include the spikes being twisted about an axis lateral to the attachment section(s).

Claim 16 (Currently Amended): An I-beam comprising:

- a) upper and lower flanges that each include a pair of timber members; and
- b) the metal connector according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1,

wherein one pair of timber members is located on each attachment section(s) of the metal connector to form the flanges of the I-beam.

Claim 17 (Previously Presented): A method of making an I-beam including the connector according to claim 1, comprising the steps of:

- a) positioning the connector into a pressing station;

- b) positioning a pair of timber members either side of at least one attachment section(s) having spikes projecting from opposite sides; and
- c) simultaneously pressing the timber members onto the spikes so as to form an upper or lower flange of an I-beam.

Claim 18 (Original): The method according to claim 17, wherein a further pair of timber members are fixed to the connector in the pressing station or an additional pressing station to form the other flange of the I-beam.

Claim 19 (Cancelled).

Claim 20 (New): An integrally formed metal connector for use in the fabrication of structural I-beams having upper and lower flanges in which each flange includes a pair of timber components, the connector including:

- (i) a continuous metal web that extends longitudinally of the flanges of an I-beam and transversely between the flanges of the I-beam in a panel formation; and
- (ii) spatially separated attachment sections that extend from the metal web in a single one piece structure, wherein the attachment sections are adapted for location between the timber components of the upper and lower flanges and include a plurality of spikes projecting outwardly from opposite sides thereof that are capable of piercing and fastening one pair of timber components to the connector to form the flanges of the I-beam.

Claim 21 (New): The metal connector according to claim 1, wherein the continuous metal web includes stiffening elements formed thereon.